



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MELBOURNE

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

### **COVID-19 Implications for the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne**

**As at: Wednesday 25 March 2020, 12.00 pm**

The following Guidelines are approved by Most Rev Peter A Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, to assist Clergy and Faithful with questions pertaining to specific areas of liturgy and ministry in the Archdiocese of Melbourne during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<b>Masses and church buildings</b>	<p>Except for the exemptions noted below, all public Masses, Liturgies and communal devotions (whether indoors or outdoors) are temporarily suspended until further notice.</p> <p>Also affected by this closure are church buildings, adoration chapels and other church buildings used for public prayer and religious services.</p> <p>Priests may celebrate Mass privately in a closed church for the purposes of live streaming. In doing so all precautions such as physical distancing and hygiene measures must be modelled and met.</p> <p>This is not an opportunity to bring select groupings of people together, and numbers can only be extended to a Server and a Reader with the possible inclusion of a camera/iPad operator and a musician.</p> <p>Prison Masses are currently suspended – although Chaplaincy continues until further notice.</p>
<b>Priests Daily Mass</b>	<p>Daily Mass should be offered for all God's people, the faithful in Melbourne, and the wider community.</p> <p>The Bishops Conference is hoping to have a specific "Mass in Time of Pandemic" approved for use soon. <i>(Awaiting approval of the Holy See.)</i></p>
<b>Home Masses</b>	<p>Masses in family homes or other such private or domestic locations are not permitted until further notice.</p>

<b>Private Prayer</b>	<p>Except for exemptions noted below, churches are to be closed under all circumstances until further notice. This includes for private prayer.</p> <p>This directive includes people being able to visit and access churches and chapels.</p>
<b>Baptisms</b>	<p>Baptisms are to be postponed, unless there is an urgent and grave pastoral need. (Can. 857; 860)</p> <p>All guidelines must be followed regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limited numbers (no more than 5 persons, including celebrant);</li> <li>- physical distancing measures;</li> <li>- hygiene precautions (with particular attention to the use of water and cotton buds or swabs for anointing as per previous correspondence);</li> <li>- doors must remain closed to prevent public access.</li> </ul> <p>Baptism by immersion or baptisms using already blessed water is to be avoided. Fresh water is to be used in every individual instance of baptism, and immediately drained afterwards.</p> <p>In emergency situations priests and deacons should make themselves available for Baptism. In extreme circumstances any lay person can validly baptise using water and the Trinitarian formula. (Can 861 §2)</p>
<b>Weddings</b>	<p>Weddings are to be postponed, where possible.</p> <p>If urgent, all guidelines must be followed regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limited numbers (no more than 5 persons, including celebrant);</li> <li>- physical distancing measures;</li> <li>- hygiene precautions;</li> <li>- doors must remain closed to prevent public access.</li> <li>- no lingering outside the church following the wedding.</li> </ul>
<b>Funerals</b>	<p>If urgent all guidelines must be followed regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limited numbers (no more than 10 persons, including celebrant);</li> <li>- physical distancing;</li> <li>- hygiene precautions;</li> <li>- doors must remain closed to prevent public access.</li> </ul> <p>It will not be possible to organise any refreshments in the Parish hall or centre after the funeral is concluded.</p> <p>Permission is granted to hold the funeral Liturgy in a funeral parlour, if the family so wish.</p>

	Families may wish to arrange a Memorial Mass at a later date, and after the public emergency and relevant social restrictions have passed.
<b>Penance</b>	<p>Only the First Rite of Penance (individual confession and absolution) can be celebrated, because of the restrictions on numbers.</p> <p>Priests will do their best to respond to individual requests for the Sacrament, but it is not possible to establish and publicise particular times when the sacrament will be available.</p> <p>The location for the individual celebration of the Sacrament can be adapted to ensure the required health needs.</p> <p>People who identify within themselves the need for Confession should contact their Parish clergy directly.</p> <p>If there arises an urgent need to impart sacramental absolution to several people together out of grave necessity (eg. to a group of persons in a hospital setting who are dying from Coronavirus), then permission is to be sought from the Regional Vicar. The provisions of Can.961 and 962 are to be met and applied for validity.</p>
<b>Confirmations</b>	<p>All Confirmations are hereby suspended, unless a grave and urgent pastoral need arises.</p> <p>Individual application must be sought and directed through the Parish Priest to the Regional Vicar.</p>
<b>Communion to, and Anointing of, the Sick</b>	<p>It is important that the Sacrament of Anointing be available to those seriously ill and in danger of death.</p> <p>Holy Communion is not to be given to anyone, including the sick and Homebound, except as <i>Viaticum</i> for the dying.</p> <p>Only Priests are to offer <i>Viaticum</i> and Anointing to the sick and dying, complying with the protocols of the relevant hospitals or aged-care facilities (washing hands, etc.)</p> <p>If more Oil of the Sick is required, please make contact with the Cathedral office.</p> <p>In general circumstances, if a Priest is requested to visit the home of a sick and dying person, he must take every precaution in relation to those who may be contagious.</p>